



Providing Effective Testimony

Below are a few thoughts from Eugene Planning Division staff on providing effective testimony at public hearings. These suggestions may be useful to neighborhood leaders in preparing testimony on behalf of the neighborhood organization or in providing guidance to people that may want to submit testimony individually.

- **Focus testimony on issues relevant to the approval criteria for a decision.** Decisions regarding land use applications are based on the required approval criteria from the Eugene Code. We have a number of ways to inform folks of the relevant approval criteria according to application type, such as through informational handouts, web resources, public notices, and staff reports. When in doubt as to which criteria are applicable, or how to interpret specific criteria, feel free to contact the Planning Division or the Planner assigned to a particular application.
- **Consult with staff early in the process. Review the staff report prior to the public hearing.** Through early interaction and later review of the staff report on a given application or hearing item, much can be learned with regard to interpreting and applying the approval criteria, and related adopted neighborhood plans and policies. In some situations, and as staff resources permit, it may be possible for Planning staff to attend neighborhood meetings for further interaction or explanation. It is far more efficient and meaningful to resolve questions early and testify to facts and a particular position or opinion related to the criteria, rather than simply including unanswered questions with testimony.
- **Organize public testimony when possible. Consolidate and avoid redundancy.** The most effective public testimony tends to be organized according to the approval criteria and relevant policy direction, whether on an individual level or orchestrated among several speakers. Remember that the public hearing and decision-making process is not a popularity contest or based on individual votes. If you have prepared and submit written testimony at the hearing, it is not necessary or advantageous to also read the same testimony at the hearing. The written testimony will receive the same consideration by the decision-maker, whether read into the record at the hearing or submitted in writing.
- **Be strategic with your involvement. Pick your “battles” carefully.** You will have more credibility and influence in the decision-making process by acknowledging the need to balance competing interests, and reflecting an understanding of all sides of a difficult issue. Instead of simply taking a shotgun approach to refuse or deny a project, first consider how best to shape the project in a positive way that works well for the neighborhood.
- **Consider inviting early involvement and interaction between the applicant/developer and the neighborhood group.** As with early involvement of staff, it may be beneficial for issue resolution to invite the applicant/developer to a neighborhood meeting. It may be that neighborhood concerns can be addressed with further understanding and willingness on the part of the applicant/developer, outside of the formal decision-making process. In some cases, this would be an ideal forum for addressing concerns or issues that are not related directly to the approval criteria but are nonetheless important to the neighborhood.